

Apr 74

NC-9563-J

ANNEX MIKE

TO

FOURTH MARINE DIVISION
OPERATIONS REPORT

IWO JIMA

2nd ARMORED AMPHIBIAN BATTALION REPORT

NOT A PART OF THE
OFFICIAL RECORD
EXCERPT

REGRADED **UNCLASSIFIED**

BY AUTHORITY OF E.O. 10501

BY A. L. Adams

ON 15 Sep 89

[REDACTED]

HR
30 May 45

PO Ref # 6882

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HEADQUARTERS
SECOND ARMORED AMPHIBIAN BATTALION
FMF, PACIFIC, IN THE FIELD

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SPECIAL ACTION REPORT, IWO JIMA CAMPAIGN

PLANS AND REHEARSAL

The Second Armored Amphibian Battalion was divided into two equal parts for the support of the Fourth and Fifth Marine Divisions on the Iwo Jima Operation.

A and B Companies (17 LVTA's each) and det. H&S Company (1 LVTA) were attached to the Fourth Marine Division which further attached A Company to the 25th Marines, B Company to the 23rd Marines and the det. H&S Company to the Fourth Marine Division Support group.

C and D Companies (17 LVTA's each) and det. H&S Company (1 LVTA) were attached to the Fifth Marine Division as assigned.

Both divisions supplied adequate orders, maps, and plans in sufficient time to brief the battalion which was done prior to departure from Saipan because of the numerous ships this battalion was embarked upon. Main parts of paragraph 3 of the battalion orders to the two groups follows:

3. a. Company A at HOW-hour lands on beach BLUE I. Company A (less 1st platoon) will proceed inland past the first terrace, but not so far as to become endangered by our own N.G.F. and from defilade position will cover the debarkation of assault troops from LVT's and will support the attack until fire is masked by advancing assault troops.

The 1st Platoon after landing will cover the right (n) flank during debarkation of assault troops. After completion of initial mission, Company A will attach one platoon to BLT-3 on the right to support the attack in the seizure of beach BLUE II. Remainder of LVTA(4)'s remain in position prepared to support and/or deliver supporting fire as ordered by RCT Commander.

b. Company B at HOW-hour lands on YELLOW beaches, proceeds rapidly inland past the first terrace, but not go so far as to be endangered by our N.G.F., and from defilade positions

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approach to the beach. When unmasked by LCI(G)'s and LCS's and when arriving within effective range, LVTA(4)'s will open fire with all available weapons. The left (s) flank platoon on beach GREEN I will ech approximately fifty yds to the left rear after passing through the line of LCS(L)'s in order to engage flank targets opposing the landing.

Three maneuvers were held by the battalion on the beaches of Saipan, the final one being in conjunction with the 5th Amph TracBn.

The battalion was ready to depart.

Each company carried two cargo LVT's, one for maintenance and one for a supply train. A radio jeep was preloaded in all except one maintenance LVT to establish rapid communications.

It was also planned by this battalion to carry one 6X6, one cargo jeep, and one arc welder per company and, in addition, 2 spare parts trailers, 2 water trailers and one 6X6 (wrecker) were to be carried for the battalion, but, when the ships arrived at Saipan no spaces were available on 5th Division ships and only space for one 6X6 and two cargo jeeps was available on the 4th Division ships.

The first wave troops of A and B Companies were placed on two Hospital LST's and the maintenance personnel of A and B Companies were placed on two Radar LST's. Thirteen men (B Company) were placed on an APA.

C and D Companies were placed on 9 LST's with only the platoons kept intact.

MOVEMENT TO OBJECTIVE

On the 10th, 11th and 12th of February, 1945 this battalion embarked on 17 LST's and 5 APA's for a rehearsal and transportation to the target area.

Considerable confusion resulted during the rehearsal as some wave guide boats in the Fifth Division zone did not appear.

Routine maintenance and further briefing were carried on while enroute to the target.

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SHIP TO SHORE MOVEMENT

Debarking from LST's at 0730, 19 February, 1945, some of the LVTA's were met by Navy guide boats and led in column to the LD where the LVTA's executed a column right or left, followed by the correct flank movement required to bring the battalion on line facing the beach. The LVTA's without guide boats made their way to the LD without difficulty.

Off of the 4thMarDiv beaches one guide boat per beach took position forward of the LVTA wave and at 0827, upon signal from the control ship, led the formation to the line of LCI's and LCS's.

From the line of LCI's and LCS's in the 4thMarDiv zone, the LVTA's preceded the guide boats which continued to control the wave until it was 300 yds from the beach.

When the line of LCI's and LCS's was passed, the LVTA's spread to fill the gaps caused by circumventing the support vessels and 68 LVTA's commenced firing. The right and left platoons of the battalion formation echeloned to bring greater fire power on the flanks of the Corps beaches.

Inaccurate enemy mortar and high velocity shells were received as the first wave neared the beach. Although several LVTA's/suffered hits, only one was destroyed.

Firing neutralization fire on the beach approach, each LVTA had an average ammunition expenditure of 23 rounds of 75mm howitzer with M48 fuse, 128 rounds 50 caliber and 473 rounds of 30 caliber.

NARRATIVE OF OPERATION

A and B Companies attached to 4thMarDiv D-day - 19Feb45.

A Company on BLUE I, B Company on YELLOW I and II landed abreast at 0905 and, where possible, continued to fire neutral-

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ization fire on the high ground to the front and right (n) flank of the division beaches. The LVTA's ceased firing when they were masked by steep terraces and advancing infantry.

Only one LVTA of B Company and three LVTA's of A Company succeeded in surmounting the second terrace because of the slope and poor traction on the loose, volcanic ash beaches.

At 1030 the density of enemy mortar and high velocity shells (47 and 75mm) on the beach increased until 7 LVTA's were destroyed and one platoon of B Company was ordered into the water where it stood by about 300 yards from the beach.

One LVTA (B Company) delivered fire on the right (n) flank of airport no. I as ordered by 1/23 but the remaining LVTA's (B Company) were ineffective the rest of D-day.

One of the three LVTA's (A Company) which surmounted the second terrace advanced on the right flank about 400 yards in front of the front lines and, from the cover of a beached Jap LSM, supported the infantry by fire.

From H plus 60 until 1730, four, sometimes five, LVTA's (A Company) fired at enemy emplaced 6 inch, 37 and 47 mm guns on the high ground north of beach BLUE II.

Both A and B Companies established beach defense along Beaches YELLOW I, II, BLUE I and II D-day night. During the night heavy mortar and artillery fire fell on the beaches destroying 2 LVTA's.

Casualties:

Personnel - 5 KIA
35 WIA
1 MIA

Material - 17 LVTA's operating
18 LVTA's not operating

Ammo expended -

75mm HE all SQ and Delay	- 1603
.50 caliber	15,720
.30 caliber	45,650

D plus 1

All LVTA's of A and B Companies which would operate in water left the beach early D plus 1 and four LVTA's (A Company) fired area fire in front of 1/24 from 0700 to 1030 with no ap-

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parent effectiveness. The remaining LVTA's tried to refuel from Bowser boats and LST's but it was found that the Bowser boats were not satisfactory as they were not sufficient in number nor were they in their assigned positions. The LST's unloading cargo could not take LVTA's aboard for repairs and, in the attempt to obtain gasoline and needed repairs aboard maintenance LST's, 5 LVTA's sank. The remaining LVTA's returned to the beach and prepared beach defenses.

Again on the night of D plus 1, heavy mortar, artillery and rocket fire was received on the division beaches but this battalion suffered no casualties in either personnel or material.

Casualties:

<u>Personnel</u>	1 KIA
	4 WIA
	1 Sk&E
<u>Material:</u>	11 LVTA's operating
	24 LVTA's not operating

D plus 2

From the water 3 LVTA's (A Company) supported 1/24 by effective fire on scattered enemy personnel and caves in the boat basin until relieved at 1430. A Company was relieved from 3/25 and attached to 1/24. The night of D plus 2, A and B Companies established beach defense on YELLOW I, II, BLUE I, and II with 7 LVTA's.

Casualties:

<u>Personnel</u>	2 KIA
	1 Sk&E
<u>Material:</u>	7 LVTA's Operating
	28 LVTA's Not Operating

D plus 3

In support of 1/24, from 1200-1300, 4 LVTA's (A Company) fired at caves and pillboxes on high ground on right (n) flank of RCT 24 from positions on BLUE II.

B Company was released from RCT 23 and attached to RCT 21.

Casualties:

<u>Personnel</u>	None
<u>Material:</u>	6 LVTA's operating
	29 LVTA's not operating

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D plus 4

One LVTA (A Company) took the Commanding Officer of 1/24 on reconnaissance from 1100-1200 along shoreline to 300 yards north of Tachiina point.

At 1230 two LVTA's, positioned on the beach, fired at a Jap O.P. in TA 183-X&Y.

A Company maintenance crews landed, performed what maintenance that was possible and returned to their ship.

The usual beach defense mission was established by A and B Companies on night of D plus 4.

Casualties:

Personnel

2 Sk&E

Material:

6 LVTA's operating

29 LVTA's not operating

D plus 5

Five LVTA's (A Company) were dispatched for fire support to 1/24. Three LVTA's went up coast road to TA 167-A and fired on targets designated by the infantry unit commanders while the remaining two LVTA's fired from the water on inland targets. One of the two water borne LVTA's went ashore at the small boat basin and destroyed 2 enemy machine gun nests while receiving heavy small arms and rifle grenade fire. This strong point was reported to the supported unit and was later neutralized by rockets and aerial strafing.

Casualties:

Personnel

None

Material:

9 LVTA's operating

26 LVTA's not operating

D plus 6

On D plus 6, 25 February, 5 LVTA's (A Company) were dispatched at 0930 to support 3/25 with fire from sea but were released from their mission when it was found that the rough water made the fire ineffective.

Casualties:

Personnel

1 WIA

Material:

11 LVTA's operating

24 LVTA's not operating

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D plus 7

No operation or activity.

Casualties:

Personnel 1 Sk&E

D plus 8

B Company relieved A Company at 0700, 27 February and 2 LVTA's (B Company) proceeded up north east coast at 0810 but rough water prevented accurate fire and they were released at 1800. B Company took up the beach defense vacated by A Company and placed 1 LVTA north of the East Boat Basin, 1 in East Boat Basin and 3 LVTA's south of beached LSM on BLUE II.

Casualties:

Personnel None

Material: 11 LVTA's operating
24 LVTA's not operating

D plus 9

Three LVTA's (B Company) left the beach at 0840 to support right flank of 3/24. After working with K Company cleaning out cliff area, the LVTA's were recalled to the beach at 1030.

Beach defense placed 2 LVTA's north of East Boat Basin, one in the East Boat Basin and four on BLUE beaches which tied in with the defense of 5thAmphTracBn.

Casualties:

Personnel None

Material: 13 LVTA's operating
22 LVTA's not operating

From D plus 10 until D plus 14 no operations except beach defense were undertaken. On D plus 12, B Company was detached from RCT 25 and attached to RCT 23.

D plus 14

B Company was released from RCT 23 and assigned to RCT 25. Three LVTA's (B Company) were used to fire from water in front of lines. These fired at targets of opportunity, furnished harassing fire, spotted effective fire on targets for artillery and returned at 1800.

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Casualties:

Personnel None
Material: 13 LVTA's operating
22 LVTA's not operating

D plus 15

From 1145 - 1500, B Company used 3 LVTA's in the water to fire harassing fire on flanks of the enemy opposing RCT 25.

Casualties:

Personnel None
Material: 13 LVTA's operating
22 LVTA's not operating

D plus 16

Beginning at 0930, ending at 1040, three LVTA's (B Company) made a run along the north right flank firing harassing fire but observed no enemy action. At 1445, 6 LVTA's were sent to observe reported enemy activity in TA 185-D, E, & A and render harassing fire. The 6 LVTA's returned at 1545 having delivered fire but observed no enemy action.

Casualties:

Personnel None
Material: 13 LVTA's operating
22 LVTA's not operating

D plus 17

No operation or activity, except for beach defense.

D plus 18

Three LVTA's (B Company) left the beach as ordered at 1045 to deliver fire at road and draws (TA 185-V&W and TA 168-A&B) and returned at 1215.

This date 30 men and 1 officer from 2d Arm Amph Bn were attached to a Provisional Infantry Battalion under Lt. Col. Krulewich.

Casualties:

Personnel None
Material: 13 LVTA's operating
22 LVTA's not operating

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D plus 19

Harassing fire was delivered by 3 LVTA's at TA 185-V&W from 0745 to 1040.

Three LVTA's (A Company) were supplied B Company to place in beach defense north of East Boat Basin making a total of 9 LVTA's on beach defense.

Casualties:

<u>Personnel</u>	none
<u>Material:</u>	13 LVTA's operating 22 LVTA's not operating

D plus 20

Three LVTA's (B Company) made a nonfiring reconnaissance up north east shore at 1115 for 2/24 and returned to beach at 1430.

Casualties:

<u>Personnel</u>	None
<u>Material:</u>	13 LVTA's operating 22 LVTA's not operating

D plus 21

No operation or activity, except for beach defense.

D plus 22

RCT 25 used 3 LVTA's opposite pocket (TA 185-V&W) from 0840 until 1030. Some machine gun and mortar fire was received but believed to be overs from friendly troops.

A and B Companies had no more activity except for beach defense until embarked aboard ship for return to base camp.

C and D Companies attached to 5thMarDiv D-day, 19Feb45:

At 0905 D Company (17 LVTA's) landed simultaneously with and on the left of C Company (17 LVTA's). Little fire was received by both companies on the approach to the beach but neither could surmount the terraces to the front as previously planned. Masked by the infantry and terraces shortly after landing, both companies left the beach and reorganized in the water. After reorganizing, C and D Companies moved to south of

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the division beaches and kept Hot Rocks and targets of opportunity under fire until 1730. Both companies came in at 1730 but, as the congestion on the beach forbid more than 2 platoons, the remaining 4 platoons were ordered to ships. Unable to locate the LST's, the four platoons remained in the water all of D day night. Refuelling was done during the day from Bowser boats.

Casualties:

Personnel 6 WIA
Material: 31 LVTA's operating
4 LVTA's not operating

D plus 1

At 0700, D Company was ordered from the beach by the beach commander and remained afloat all day. Two platoons landed at 1700 for beach defense.

At 0700, C Company was only partially resupplied with ammunition as there was a shortage of 75mm howitzer on the beach but completely resupplied with fuel. Hot Rocks was then kept under observation and fire from 0930 until 1400. One platoon remained on the beach for defense at night while the other two platoons (C Company) boarded LST's.

Casualties:

Personnel 1 WIA
Material: 28 LVTA's operating
7 LVTA's not operating

D plus 2

Two platoons C Company remained on the beach for beach defense while all remaining LVTA's went aboard LST's that would accept them. One LVTA (D Company) at sea after being ordered to leave the LST by the LST commander.

Casualties:

Personnel None
Material: 21 LVTA's operating
14 LVTA's not operating

D plus 3

At 1400, D Company came ashore.

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One platoon C Company maintained the defense of RED beach II.

Casualties:

<u>Personnel</u>	None
<u>Material</u>	23 LVTA's operating 12 LVTA's not operating

D plus 4

Two LVTA's assisted the Corps Reconnaissance Company in mopping up TA 147. All LVTA's (C and D Companies) except one went to PURPLE beach for beach defense. The one LVTA remained on beach RED II for defense of that beach.

Casualties:

<u>Personnel</u>	None
<u>Material</u>	23 LVTA's operating 12 LVTA's not operating

D plus 5

At 0730 D Company killed 10 Japs trying to come through their defense position on PURPLE beach.

Casualties:

<u>Personnel</u>	1 KIA 2 WIA
<u>Material</u>	24 LVTA's Operating 11 LVTA's not operating

D plus 6

No operation or activity, except for beach defense.

D plus 7

C and D Companies were given the mission of supporting 2/27 in TA 198 from water borne positions. C Company furnished 9, and D Company 11 LVTA's. D Company destroyed 3 enemy occupied caves with the 75mm howitzer, but as our own infantry was endangered by LVTA fire, orders were given to cease fire.

Casualties:

<u>Personnel</u>	None
<u>Material</u>	24 LVTA's operating 11 LVTA's not operating

No activity until D plus 21, 12 March, by either company except for the movement of all LVTA's on D plus 10 to TA 147-G&L

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for defense positions on the beach.

Casualties:

Personnel	None
<u>Material</u> :	23 LVTA's operating
	12 LVTA's not operating

D plus 21 - 12 March

Transportation was furnished by 10 LVTA's to the Corps Reconnaissance Officers for the reconnaissance of KAMA and KANGOKU Rocks.

Casualties:

Personnel	None
<u>Material</u> :	23 LVTA's operating
	12 LVTA's not operating

D plus 22

Ten LVTA's (C Company) supported a landing of the Corps Reconnaissance Company on KAMA and KANGOKU Rocks with neutralization fire.

After D plus 22 neither company had any activity except for beach defense until released to battalion control for reembarkation.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - SUPPLY

As all amphibious tracked vehicles are disembarked at approximately the same time, it is to be anticipated that all LVT's will need to refuel at the same time. The Bowser boats were not sufficient to handle the refueling problems when gasoline was needed by the LVTA's. Often the Bowser boats, after being approached, carried gasoline of incorrect octane rating. Bowser boats were not evenly distributed along the Corps beaches.

It is recommended by this battalion that Bowser boats carry a sign on which "100" or "80" is written to indicate the octane rating of gasoline carried.

Furthermore, it is recommended that cargo LVT's refuel from the LST's on which the cargo LVT's are loaded and that the "100" octane Bowser boats be used for the LVTA's, removing the necessity of the LVTA's returning to the LST area.

A more even distribution of Bowser boats off Corps beaches would have facilitated refueling.

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It is also recommended that the LST's be equipped with boat booms to expedite refueling as several LVTA's could be tied to the booms simultaneously.

AMMUNITION

A and B Companies were unable to obtain 75mm howitzer ammunition although it was requested through RCT's, control boats, and the division. As the result, A and B Companies drew 75mm howitzer ammunition from the artillery units which had little to spare.

COMMUNICATION

The SCR 508 radios (two receivers) were used in the battalion and company command LVTA's while SCR 528's (one receiver) were used in the remaining LVTA's. Because the high frequency sets are not used as widely as the low frequency sets, this battalion was able to use the number of different frequencies necessary for adequate communications.

The frequency crystals did not jar off frequency and very little drift was encountered. The waterproofed radio boxes were approximately 80% effective and the only waterproofing done by this battalion was the application of submarine cable waterproofing compound to the antenna mast bases. The SCR 300's which were used for liaison with infantry units did not perform well in a running LVTA as the noise of the engine made the reception inaudible.

It is recommended that the radios be mounted in the cargo compartments of each LVTA to afford better protection from salt water, and that this battalion be supplied with SCR 510's for liaison.

MATERIAL MODIFICATIONS MADE

ARMOR

As learned by experience the LVTA with one fourth inch armor base offers insufficient protection from small arms fire. This battalion equipped all LVTA's with the auxiliary armor plate kit for LVT's which consisted of a 1/2 inch bow plate and four 1/4 inch pontoon plates. In the majority of cases the added armor stopped shell fragments and in no instance did small arms fire penetrate the added protection.

Small arms fire and shell fragments did penetrate the 1/4 inch armor not protected by the additional armor.

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The increase in weight caused by the addition of the extra armor did not effect the seaworthiness or land operation adversely.

Most LVTA's with 100 operating hours were in fair condition when the operation ceased.

MATERIAL

The .50 caliber skymount was modified in that the complete cradle was discarded and the tripod head M2 on 12 inch extensions was substituted. A 18"x24"x1/2" armor shield was placed in front of the LVTA commander.

The .50 caliber as modified was easier to handle and therefore more efficient but the .50 caliber operation was still cumbersome.

The Red and Green guide lights placed on the instrument panel and operated by the LVTA commander with a toggle switch should be placed in all LVTA's to insure a method of directing the drivers when other means of communication fail.

The bulkhead behind the driver and his assistant was removed for ventilation and in some vehicles electric blowers brought in cool air for the drivers.

In order to facilitate the towing of vehicles, towing cables were equipped with hooks in place of clevises which were slower and prone to jamming.

RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS

GYRO-STABILIZER AND POWER TRAVERSE

As has been recommended, the installation of a gyro-stabilizer would improve the water borne gunnery.

BILGE PUMP

If an auxiliary means (separated from the engine) of pumping water could be provided, LVTA's with inoperative engines could be pumped and would not sink because of slow leaks.

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LOADING

It is recommended that each company be loaded on one LST with all its maintenance and supply gear.

Furthermore the company LST should carry only gear for the company.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

Foul weather gear is necessary for at least the driver and assistant driver as water pours through the vision slits and hatches in an ordinary sea.

If LVTA's are to be used as a support weapon in the role of artillery as is directed by higher echelon, it is recommended that at least 2 bull dozers (T-18) for the purpose of digging in ammunition and weapons be added to the TBA.

R. M. Fawell, Jr.

R. M. FAWELL, JR.
Lieutenant Colonel, U. S. Marine Corps Reserve,
Commanding.

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ANNEX ABLE TO SPECIAL ACTION REPORT, IWO JIMA CAMPAIGN

ADMINISTRATION

RECAPITULATION OF CASUALTIES - PERSONNEL

KILLED		WOUNDED (EV)		SICK (EV)		WOUNDED (NON EV)		MISSING	
O	E	O	E	O	E	O	E	O	E
1	11	4	41	0	9	0	9	0	1

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that regardless of the divisions to which attached that all Reports and Administration be handled through one centralized unit. It is further recommended that a copy of the Standing Operation Procedure for embarkation rosters, reports, and other administrative details required by higher echelons be furnished this organization by the unit to which it is attached. In the past operation this battalion did receive administrative matter pertaining to the above subjects, but only to the extent of reference to orders published and distributed before this battalion was attached to the divisions, therefore the battalion did not have copies of these references.

R M Fawell Jr.
R. M. FAWELL, JR.,
Lieutenant Colonel, U. S. Marine Corps Reserve,
Commanding.

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ANNEX BAKER TO SPECIAL ACTION REPORT, IWO JIMA CAMPAIGN-MEDICAL

The Medical Section of the Second Armored Amphibian Battalion consisted of the Battalion Surgeon, Battalion Dental Officer, and thirteen enlisted hospital corpsman. The personnel was further subdivided in order that the two flank companies were assigned three corpsmen each and the two other line companies two each for the initial assault wave. The Headquarters section comprising the Battalion Surgeon, Battalion Dental Officer, and three corpsman formed the Battalion Aid Station group. This group embarked at Saipan with their respective companies. The journey from Saipan to the target area was of short duration and no sickness of personnel was encountered. Sanitation was satisfactory.

In the assault phase the company corpsmen went ashore as crew members in LVTA's. The Battalion Aid Station group remained aboard Hospital APA 120 on call. Each LVTA was equipped with a complete First Aid Kit, while auxiliary supplies for each company viz: sick call supplies, sanitation equipment with prefabricated heads, DDT sprayets were preloaded aboard maintenance tractors. The corpsmen landed in the initial wave and remained with their companies handling any of their casualties or those of other units on hand. The supplies preloaded in maintenance tractors were for the most part lost when these vehicles were sunk.

In the meantime the Headquarters section functioned aboard the Hospital APA 120 in collaboration with a medical company. On D plus 1 when the Medical Company was ordered ashore contrary to plans, the Headquarters section took over the function mobilizing all available non-medical personnel to assist in handling and treating all casualties.

The Battalion Aid Station was ordered ashore when the Battalion CP was established. Equipment in a preloaded ambulance jeep was brought ashore and a Battalion Aid Station set up in a large cistern in the vicinity of MOTOYAMA Airfield #1. In as much as two companies were located on the BLUE beaches and two on PURPLE beaches, this represented an approximate mid-point. It was in close proximity to evacuation points as well as to Division Hospitals. There were no losses on medical personnel.

Daily visits were made to the company bivouac areas. The prefabricated heads were set up and area as well as foxholes

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dusted with DDT powder. Because of a lack of proper equipment for cooking and sterilization of mess gear, canned rations were used exclusively and the use of mess gear not permitted. Sanitation was satisfactory. There was no incidence of infectious diseases and only one case of possible dysentery and three cases of mild disorders reported. In every instance the individual admittedly used mess gear contrary to orders.

Medical supplies were adequate although the loss of medical supplies aboard the cargo tractors resulted in a temporary shortage in the companies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

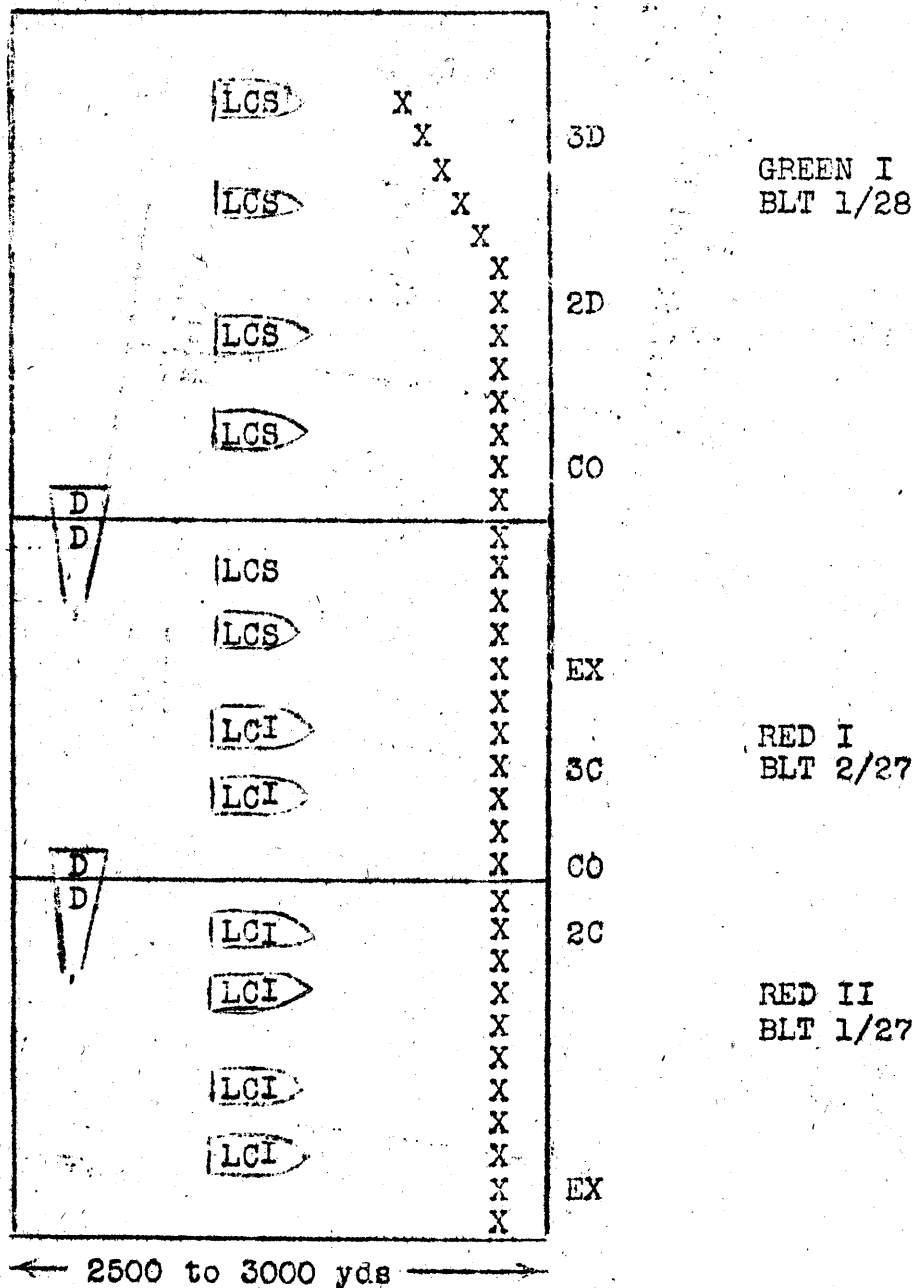
It has been observed that wearing of clothing impregnated with dimethylphthalate results in a chemical dermatitis of sensitive parts ie, the scrotal area. Apparently, prolonged wearing especially when clothes have been wet causes this dermatitis. It is recommended that impregnated clothing, in the case of LVTA personnel, not be worn while in tanks and subjected to immersion in water but be worn once a bivouac area is established on the beach.

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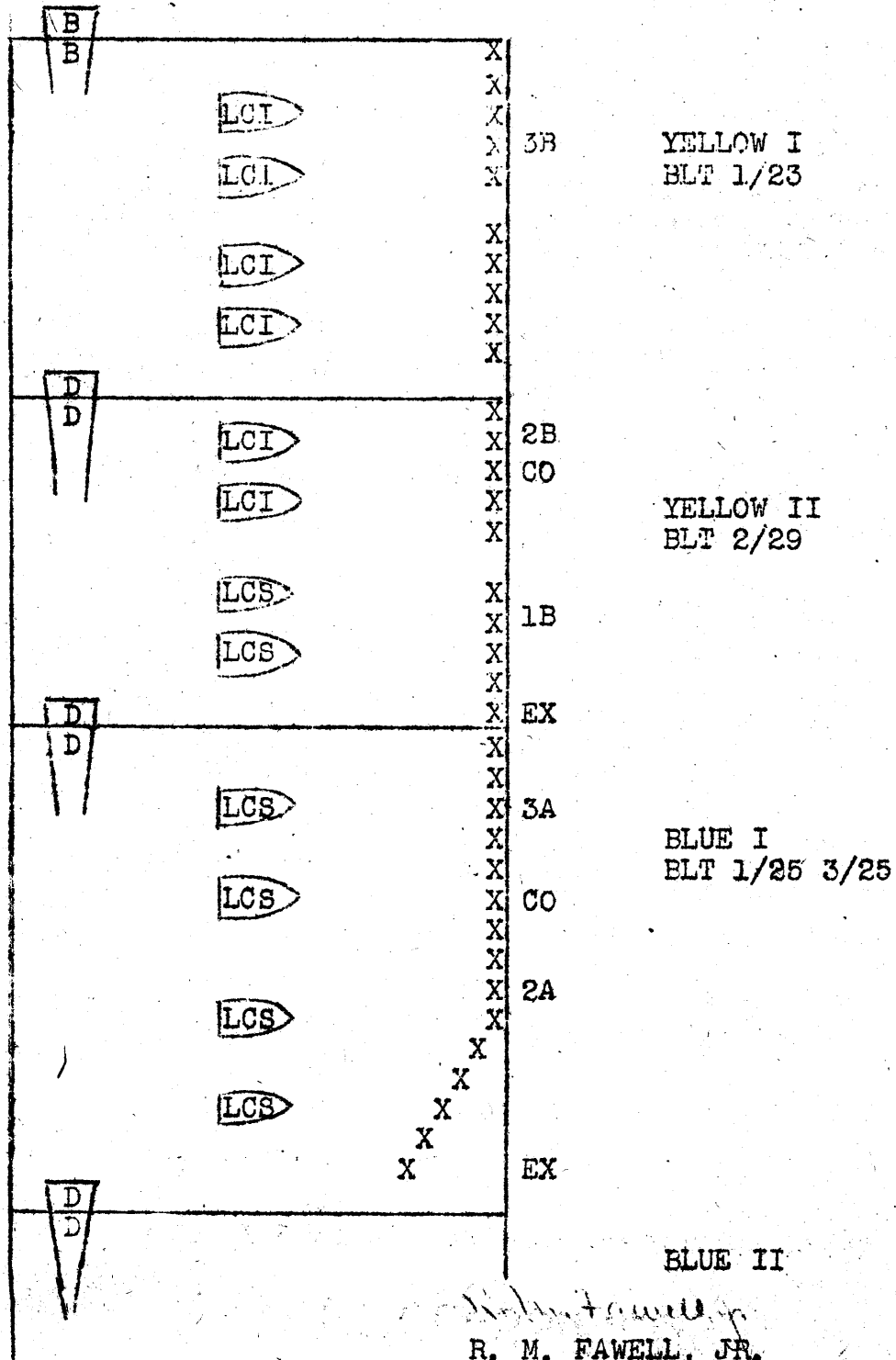
APPENDIX 1 TO SPECIAL ACTION REPORT, IWO JIMA CAMPAIGN



X indicates LVT(A)(4).

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APPENDIX 2 TO SPECIAL ACTION REPORT, IWO JIMA CAMPAIGN RECAPITULATION OF CASUALTIES - MATERIAL

LVTA's

Destroyed by enemy fire (mortars and high velocity)	6
Sunk because of mechanical failures	8
Sunk because of leaks caused by enemy fire	7
Sunk due to insufficient fuel	8
Operating at conclusion of operation	<u>41</u>
Total	70

LVT's

Sunk because of mechanical failure	2
Operating at conclusion of operation	<u>7</u>
TOTAL	9

One LVTA ceased to operate because of the failure of low gear needle bearings and could not be repaired because of lack of parts. One LVTA had the controlled differential to fail but this assembly was replaced in one day.

R. M. Fawell, Jr.
R. M. FAWELL, JR.,
Lieutenant Colonel, U. S. Marine Corps Reserve,
Commanding.

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APPENDIX 3 TO SPECIAL ACTION REPORT, IWO JIMA CAMPAIGN

ARMORMENT

Each LVTA carried a 75mm howitzer, one 50 caliber machine gun, mounted in the turret ring, one 30 caliber machine gun in front of the assistant driver and one 30 caliber machine gun mounted in front of the howitzer loader.

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ANNEX NAN
TO
FOURTH MARINE DIVISION
OPERATIONS REPORT
IWO JIMA
5th AMPHIBIAN TRACTOR
BATTALION REPORT

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Serial No. 043-45
GLS/ma

HEADQUARTERS
FIFTH AMPHIBIAN TRACTOR BATTALION
FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC
IN THE FIELD

12 April, 1945.

From: The Commanding Officer.
To: The Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific.
Via: The Commanding General, Fourth Marine Division.
Subject: Special Action Report, Iwo Jima Campaign.
Reference: (a) Pac Fleet Conf ltr 1CL-45, dated 1Jan45.
(b) FMF Gen Ord 66-44, dated 27Dec44.
(c) VAC Staff Memo No. 5-45, dated 10Mar45.
(d) 4th MarDiv SOP No. 1-45, dated 8Feb45.
Enclosures: (A) Maintenance Report.
(B) Medical and Casualty Report.

1. Preparation For Combat

(a) In preparation for the Iwo Jima operation the training schedule covered the following important subjects: communications, formation driving, physical development, concentrated pre-invasion briefing and related subjects. All tractor personnel received intensified instruction, approximately 25 hours, in the correct operating procedure of the "OS" radio. Semaphore signaling was also practiced. Valuable training was acquired by the practice of formation driving and seventy-five replacement personnel were given a month of driving instruction. To assure the good physical condition of the troops supervised calisthenics were alternated three times a week with swimming classes. Two months previous to the present operation the training schedule was intensified and all subjects were given a review. One month before the operation all personnel involved began a pre-invasion briefing which familiarized them with the overall plan and their particular assignment.

(b) During the Iwo operation this battalion used two (2) LVT models; the LVT 2 and the LVT 4. These tractors were received with a one half inch sheet of armor plate on the bow and one quarter inch plate on the pontoons. Having suffered casualties in former operations for lack of adequate armor this battalion made modifications utilizing armor plate off old LVTs. On the LVT 4 the conventional one half inch splinter shield was welded above the engine compartment and a strip of quarter inch plate was welded inside the cargo compartment to cover the unprotected area behind the track. Besides this addition a quarter inch strip was welded along the outside of the top sponson. On the LVT 2 one half inch splinter shields were welded on each side of the cab and a sheet of one quarter inch plate, approximately four by five feet, was welded to the inside of the forward part of the cargo compartment. These modifications were designed for the maximum protection of passengers and crew.

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(continued)

(c) Each LVT was equipped with two gunshields and two thirty caliber machine guns. Former combat experience proved that the fifty caliber machine gun is unduly cumbersome. It is more difficult to keep clean than the thirty, and LVT firing is very infrequent. Twenty one LV's in the first wave carried fifteen hundred rounds per gun. All others carried one thousand rounds. This allotment of ammunition proved to be adequate.

(d) All tractors were equipped with one MOS radio and all command (8) LVTs had two radios installed. These enabled the LVT wave commanders to be in communication with the battalion commander at all times and with their own tractors. They also served a useful purpose as a communication set-up for the battalion's shoreparty liaison officer and they could be used in case of emergency by the infantry.

(e) The LVTs were loaded aboard the tank decks of six LSTs for transportation to the target area. Three of the LSTs were loaded from a dock and three in the water. During the rehearsal previous to the operation LVTs were reembarked aboard LSTs in the conventional manner by backing them on with the aid of guide ropes.

2. Overall Plan and Scheme of Maneuver for LVTs

(a) For the Iwo operation this battalion was attached to BCT 25 of the Fourth Marine Division. On D-Day this battalion was to land BLT 1/25 and BLT 3/25 of this regiment. For this maneuver this battalion was formed into two task groups which were designated as Task Group A and B respectively. Both groups consisted of forty-seven LVTs apiece. Task Group A with BLT 1/25 was to make the landing in four waves on the left of Blue One with the following allocation of tractors. Second wave, fourteen LVT 2s; third wave, nine LVT 4s and three LVT 2s; fifth wave, ten LVT 4s and one LVT 2; sixth wave, eight LVT 4s and two LVT 4s were used as free tractors. Task Group B which landed 3rd BLT in column of companies on the right of Blue One was formed as follows: second wave, seven LVT 2s; third wave, seven LVT 4s; fourth wave, seven LVT 4s; fifth wave, seven LVT 4s; sixth wave, six LVT 4s; six A wave, ten LVT 4s and three LVT 4s acted as free tractors. The majority of LVT 4s had four men crews, and LVT 2s had three men crews. All guns were to be handled by assault troops.

(b) Each LVT carried an average load of twenty to twenty-five troops. Besides troops LVTs carried three jeeps, mortars, machine guns, communication and demolition gear, and extra ammunition and water. Eight thousand pounds was considered a maximum load. Original operation plans called for this battalion to unload seven preloaded amphibian trailers from LST 787. An additional 32 trailers were loaded on the USS Ozark to be unloaded by LVTs on call.

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(Continued)

3. The Control Plan

(a) The Navy control set-up for this operation followed the usual procedure with a few modifications. LVT waves were controlled initially by the Trans Division Control Boat on station off the designated beach and then by LCVP guide boats, two to each wave. Rather than taking station on the flanks of each LVT wave one guide boat preceded the center LVT and one followed. This system worked very well. From the LD to the beach two LCPLs guided in an assault wave of LVT As and were then to standby and mark the center of their respective beaches. These boats failed to remain on station and were of very little use to us until replaced during the unloading phase.

(b) The battalion control organization began with the LSTs which we had been allocated. Aboard five of these we had TCS jeeps mounted topside. On the sixth ship there was not sufficient room for a jeep so it was necessary to take a portable TCS aboard. These radios assured communication between ships, all LVTs and the battalion commander. Aboard the Trans Division PC on the LD the battalion commander had a TCS for his use allocated by the Navy. In addition to the TCS for his own battalion communication, he had a 508 connecting him with the Division LVT officer on the Trans Ron PC and the other LVT battalion attached to the 4th Marine Division stationed on Yellow Beach Trans Division PC. The two LCPLs which guided in the first wave were equipped with TCS radios and each carried an LVT control officer. Command LVTs carried dual radios for the purposes previously mentioned. LVT wave officers were allocated as follows: second wave, four; third wave, three; fourth wave, one; fifth wave, three; sixth wave, two; and six A wave, one.

4. Account of Initial D-Day Landing

(a) On the morning of 19 February, 1945, the LVTs of this battalion disembarked from their LSTs and proceeded in column formation behind their lead guide boat to the LD where, by executing a left or right flank movement, as the case might be, they came into line. The process of disembarking averaged from ten to fifteen minutes depending on how the individual LSTs had their tank decks loaded. It took approximately the same time interval to form our waves once the LD had been reached. A fast moving current complicated the process of wave formation. The first wave of LVTs crossed the LD at 0830 and reached the beach at 0904. Succeeding waves were dispatched from the LD by the PC at approximately five minute intervals, and landed in good order. Ninety-four LVTs, thirty-two LVT 2s and sixty-two LVT 4s, were disembarked D-Day morning. None failed to leave their ships. Four LVT 2 maintenance tractors remained aboard to be used on call. Ninety-four LVTs reached shore landing 100% of the troops carried.

(b) This battalion's landing beach was designated as Beach Blue One, an area approximately six hundred yards in length. However, due to the fact that the Trans Division Control boats were over 500 yards off station

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(continued)

to the south to begin with the waves got off to a bad start. Some guide boats attempted to rectify the error and all tractors were ordered to bear right in their approach to the beach. As it turned out the troops carried by this battalion actually landed on Yellow Two and left flank of Blue One. No reef or offshore obstacles were encountered on the trip in. The surf could be classified as negligible D-Day. However, the steep gradient of the beach accentuated the effect of the surf and later caused several tractor casualties. The beach itself consisted of coarse, loose, volcanic sand with approximately a twenty degree slope leading to a steep wave built terrace approximately ten yards inland and ten to twelve feet in height. Evidence of mines was encountered although no casualties resulted and on the left flank of the beach embedded steel poles about three feet high prevented LVTs from negotiating the first terrace as did the extreme height of the terrace itself. Upon hitting the beach the LVT 4s executed a half right movement as ordered and then unloaded troops via their ramps. The LVT 2s disembarked troops over their sides. The high first terrace made it necessary to let the troops out only a few yards inland but no troops were landed in the water. Actually the terrace, although it prevented progress inland, provided good partial defilade. In this initial assault four LVTs became casualties from enemy fire but not until after they had hit the beach and discharged their troop load. Retraction was readily accomplished in spite of intense shell and mortar fire and LVTs returned to their parent LSTs by passing through succeeding waves and then pulling out to the flanks to avoid confusion.

(c) Approximately three hundred yards from the beach on the initial trip in some of our LVTs opened fire. Pill boxes, enemy personnel observed running off the beached APD, and the beach itself provided the targets. Approximately one thousand rounds of thirty caliber ammunition were expended with results which, due to the general confusion, could not be observed.

(d) Time and again LVT armor proved its effectiveness. The tack-on armor plate stopped a good deal of shrapnel and small arms fire. The quarter inch plate, especially on the pontoons, was frequently pierced by shrapnel but its velocity was slowed to the point where it failed to penetrate the cargo compartment. The modifications installed by this battalion turned most all shrapnel and small arms. They had good psychological value as well as affording better protection than has heretofore been offered in amphibian tractors. The strips of plate along the top sponson and behind the track enabled the crew chief to keep his head high enough to look through the machine gun slot in the gun shields. This made for better control.

5. Action After Assault Landing

(a) After the assault landing LVTs reembarked aboard their parent LSTs and awaited orders to begin unloading. The first tractors to reach shore with supplies were able to pick their way over the first terrace on the beach by locating low spots. By a careful reconnoitering of routes inland,

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(continued)

and by utilizing the same routes continually, damage due to mines was kept at a minimum. D-Day night this battalion received an urgent request for LVTs to carry ammunition to the hard pressed front lines. Approximately thirteen tractors were dispatched which were all that were available since all but one LST of our group had retired several miles to sea. LST 787 on request pulled in near the PC off Blue One to discharge the loaded LVTs which continued to haul ammunition throughout the night to the beach and to the front lines. By morning this LST had been 90% unloaded. Although balanced loads were taken in sometimes, the call was for ammunition and nothing else. One LST preload of ammunition was not much but apparently was sufficient for the troops to stay on the lines the rest of the night. The following morning, (D plus 1) LVTs continued to unload the LSTs, leaving many on shore to work cargo to inland dumps. In the ensuing days besides carrying cargo from ships to organizational dumps LVTs carried priority supplies to the front lines, unloaded beached LSTs, LSMs and LCTs, transported bodies to the cemetery, pushed LCMs off the beach, anchored LCTs to shore, evacuated wounded from the beach through high seas which small-boats could not negotiate, unloaded swamped small-boats saving valuable cargo, took Naval gun fire control officers to their ships, and the division bomb disposal officer made use of LVTs to dump duds at sea.

(b) During the unloading phase the battalion suffered considerable loss of LVTs from a combination of mechanical failures, enemy shell fire and unfavorable surf conditions. Several LVTs were also unnecessarily lost through the refusal of LSTs to take them aboard at night. A thorough discussion of this condition is considered under Comments and Recommendations. After the initial assault LVT 2s were seldom used as the demand was for LVTs with ramps. We were called upon to work on a twenty-four hour basis initially although later we were able to cut down and have merely a dozen or so LVTs standing by for emergency unloading.

(c) The refueling of LVTs presented a real problem and was handled with a lack of foresight and speed. During the assault phase refueling was accomplished by LSTs and bowser boats on Blue Beach. Even on D plus one some LSTs had no fuel available. The shortage of high octane gas was reported prior to leaving the staging area. Pontoon barges put in a late appearance but they had no gas to dispense until after dumps had been set up ashore. Bowser boats, one solution to the problem, did not put in an appearance until late D-Day afternoon and were totally inadequate in number. Their crews did not appear to be cognizant of the job to be done and reported to the Trans Division PC without fuel. These boats were sent into shore without any gas and were told to stand by for an LCM loaded with gasoline. The LCMs were not equipped with winches to put gas drums over the side and had no pumps. Conceivably drums could be transferred from an LCM to an LCVP across their ramps but it would have been a ticklish job in even a calm sea. Off shore the sea was rough and the transfer of gas and oil was rendered practically impossible.

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(Continued)

After the assault phase refueling was done from shore dumps which we built ourselves by securing fuel wherever it was available. In the course of the operation this battalion used approximately 180,000 gallons of gasoline, 930 gallons of 50 weight oil and 1,200 pounds of CG grease. This of course is a very rough estimate.

6. Communication

(a) TCS radios, Models 7-8-9 and 12 were used for this operation. Their performance was one hundred percent. All radios functioned until either they or the tractors were destroyed. All radios were enclosed in waterproof cabinets with all connections waterproofed with waterproofing compound. The only other form of communication utilized was the telephone. No trouble was encountered other than occasional broken lines which were repaired as soon as they were destroyed.

7. Motor Transport

(a) Before loading aboard ship at the staging area this battalion was allocated loading space for two 1-ton 4X4 reconnaissance trucks, but there was only space aboard ship for one. Due to the unexpected length of the campaign and the necessity of supplying the battalion with water and rations some difficulty was encountered in doing the job with one truck. LVTs were used as much as possible for this job but their presence on some roads was not desired. Other mobile equipment, such as two (2) 300 gallon water trailers, 1 luber, 2 salvage pumps, etc. were also allocated shipping space but at the staging area no room was available and we were forced to leave them behind.

8. Comments and Recommendations

(a) LST loading. The manner in which the cargo over and above the preload was stowed was highly unsatisfactory and showed complete disregard for some of the important problems of unloading. In the first place having the cargo along one side of the ship the entire length of the tank deck restricted the loading immeasurably and in many instances we had to take out shoring and shift the cargo to load 17 LVTs in the tank deck at the staging area. Even then the maximum space between the LVTs and the bulkhead was 4". This lack of space would not permit us to service the vehicles on board and hindered disembarking considerably. In addition the rear of the tank deck was also loaded down with the preload to the extent of covering up the main winch, rendering the LSTs incapable of taking aboard damaged LVTs in the earlier stages. Unloading parties were not furnished with a loading plan and were forced to break the whole load down to find specific items.

(b) Communication and control plan. The Navy communication set-up for this operation provided for the installation of a TCS and a 508 radio on the Trans Division PC boat for the battalion commander and a TCS

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(continued)

portable in each of the LCPL beach control boats. At the staging area AB 157 carrying one LCPL had received no instructions for that installation. In addition these boats were to guide the first wave of LVT As to the beach and then remain on station for further control of LVT traffic. One of these from APA 193 returned to the PC and then after closing the beach proceeded to function as a salvage boat and running hither and yon and up and down the beach rendering the amphibian tractor officer and communication set-up aboard rather useless to the battalion commander for control purposes. It is requested that provisions be made in all future operations for a conference between the amphibian tractor battalion commander and Navy wave guide officers. It was done for the first time in this operation and helped immensely to iron out misunderstandings and many questions put up by wave guide officers making their first combat landing.

(c) Refueling. It was pointed out during the planning phase for the Iwo landing by this battalion commander that 20 drums of 100 octane gas per LST going into the target was not sufficient in case of emergency. As it turned out several LSTs on D plus 1 were completely devoid of gas for refueling of LVTs.

(1) The LST is the logical refueling point for the LVT and the reservoir of fuel should be placed on it and not rely on the promise of barges which never arrive in time to be useful. Because of the tremendous need for amphibian tractors on Blue Beach so early in the assault, many of our amphibian tractors were actually shore based previous to the order. This necessitated setting up shore dumps, prior to previous plans.

(d) Balanced loads for LVTs. Balanced loads for LVTs during the unloading phase from LSTs are not practical and waste unloading time on the beach as each LVT may have to stop at 3 or 4 designated dumps to be unloaded. If each LVT carried one item unloading would be greatly expedited.

(e) LST conduct. LST control and maneuver on the approach to the debarkation point on D-Day was excellent. The LSTs were well spaced and in good position to facilitate the unloading of LVTs. No time was lost and all LVTs were disembarked in good order.

(1) It has been pointed out that several LVTs were unnecessarily lost because of refusal by LSTs to take them aboard at night. It seems that by this time an SOP for LST operation would be fairly well understood but their actions during this operation did not bear out that fact. On the night of D plus 1 during the air alert and the shipping area was smoked, many LVTs were caught water borne and forced to go aboard any LST that would have them. Most of them were ordered ashore immediately to avoid confusion and to remain until morning.

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(continued)

(2) During the night pleas were sent to the battalion commander from his own officers on LSTs that their LST was moving with tractors still in the water and requested help in getting them to take them aboard. In one instance LST 928 refused to take two LVTs aboard which were short on fuel and when they had finally exhausted their fuel trailing the LST and sank, the men were forced to go overboard and be picked up by small-boats. Such lack of cooperation is inexcusable.

(3) LST 763, an artillery LST which had two LVT 4s from this battalion aboard, unloaded Dukws on the afternoon of D plus 1. The two LVTs had to disembark to allow the Dukws to unload. They disembarked at 1130 with orders to standby until the Dukws came off. At 1730 after standing by for 6 hours they were informed by the skipper of the LST that he could not reembark them and gave no reason. He gave them the general supposed location of LST 764 and told them they might go aboard her. At dusk the tractors were caught in the smoke screen in the transport area and drifted all night. Fortunately we had radio communication and the crews were picked up the following morning by a destroyer miles at sea. Lost, two LVTs, two radio jeeps, and a load of equipment belonging to the 14th Marines.

(4) The same night LST 713, the flagship for the LST group on Blue Beach, anchored in close and notified this battalion commander that he was capable of taking LVTs aboard. A short while later a tractor was turned away from this ship and given as a reason the fact they were to take only damaged LVTs aboard. The following morning a message was sent by this battalion commander to the flagship of the Blue Beach LST group requesting he order his LSTs in close to facilitate retrieving LVTs left ashore the previous night in order to commence unloading with less delay. The return message read to the effect that they had been waiting all night to take on LVTs, but contained no reply to the request. Further requests were necessary to obtain a satisfactory reply. Such inconsistency is becoming typical of LST control and also causes unnecessary loss of equipment.

(5) The LST 787 should be commended for its splendid cooperation during the night of D-Day in unloading its cargo throughout the night. Every Naval Officer and man on the ship worked to facilitate our unloading much needed ammunition.

(f) LVT models. No new models were used on this operation, however it was very apparent that ramp type tractors were in demand in excess of their number present. The LVT 2 after the assault phase is inadequate for general unloading and causes unnecessary labor and wasted time in transporting cargo.

(1) The LVT 4 used by this battalion in the Iwo landing had an improved ramp hinge and winch mechanism which speeded up loading and unloading immeasurably.

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G. L. Shead
G. L. SHEAD

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ENCLOSURE "A" TO IWO JIMA OPERATION REPORT.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

A. Recapitulation of LVT Losses.

1. Sunk

(a) Shell fire	10
(b) Mechanical failure	16
(c) Accidents	4
Total	30

2. Burned out in ammo dump fire	2
3. Swamped in surf	8
4. Cannabilized to repair other	1
5. Knocked out on beach by shell fire	2
Total	43

(a) Of those sunk because of mechanical failure 11 were lost while under tow due to sea conditions. 8 tractors of those sunk were final drive failures and approximately 8 were engine failures of unknown description.

(b) Several other final drives went out and were replaced on shore. We also experienced studs shearing off on the rear idler sprockets. No differential trouble was encountered, but a total of 3 tractors had the first and reverse gears go out.

B. Status of LVTs before and After Operation.

1. This battalion possessed 14 rebuilt LVT 2s, 22 new LVT 2s, and 64 new LVT 4s prior to the operation. The average operating time for the LVTs was approximately 175 hours.

2. Fifty seven LVTs will require extensive overhaul to be used for further combat. Of these 57 this battalion could overhaul 20 for future operations.

C. Status of Maintenance During Assault.

1. This battalion was assigned LST 787 as a maintenance LST and the major part of our spare parts and equipment and mechanics were embarked aboard. However two maintenance sections were aboard LST 713 with a minimum of parts and equipment. Each LST carried track parts and two mechanics for minor repair work.

2. Total equipment carried:

- 2 - 2 wheel arc welders
- 4 - acetylene sets
- 1 - 1-ton truck
- 4 - Maintenance LVTs (retrievers)
- Boxes of assorted parts.

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ENCLOSURE "A" TO TWO JIMA OPERATION REPORT

(continued)

3. The major part of the equipment this battalion planned to take, such as lubers, additional transportation, spare engines, etc. were left at Saipan due to lack of loading space.

4. Four LVT 2s, rigged and equipped as retrievers by this battalion were carried as maintenance LVTs. Three of these were lost in the operation.

5. No Navy E-9A or E-20 units were available.

6. The maintenance set-up ashore was on a battalion basis and all mechanics and equipment were pooled in one area. Lack of heavy retriever equipment on the spot caused us to lose several LVTs knocked out in surf which later became unsalvageable because of being buried in shifting sand.

7. There is no question but what our maintenance facilities were inadequate. It seems that unless LVT personnel go aboard the LSTs first, adequate space for allocated and necessary equipment is not available in the event units are picked up enroute to the target. Our maintenance LST 787 was of little use to us at sea because of a faulty winch in the tank deck rendering it incapable of winching disabled LVTs aboard. In attempting to tow them through the surf, several were lost.

8. In our case we had to load maintenance equipment of the Second Armored Battalion on our maintenance LST also. In future operations which may last for an extended period the increased allocation of maintenance equipment necessary for each battalion will prohibit the use of one LST for the transport of equipment from two units. Every effort should be made to unload cargo from maintenance LSTs rapidly to free the tank deck for maintenance work.

9. Additional failures of LVTs other than those mentioned before include several bilge pump failures and continued breakage of ramp clamps. These ramp clamps were not of the modified type however.

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ENCLOSURE "B" TO IWO JIMA OPERATION REPORT

Casualty Report

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Enlisted</u>	<u>Total</u>
Killed in action	1	6	7
Wounded and Evacuated	0	20	20
Sick and evacuated	1	15	16
Wounded, not evacuated	0	10	10
Missing in action	0	2	2
	<u>2</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>55</u>

Medical Personnel

1. The total medical personnel involved in the operation included one (1) medical officer and five (5) hospital corpsmen. One (1) dental officer and four (4) hospital corpsmen were left in the rear echelon.

Equipment

2. Due to limitation of cargo space, an attempt was made to keep the amount of equipment carried to an absolute minimum. Each hospital corpsman was equipped with the regulation unit #3 reenforced by the addition of clinical thermometer, cotton applicators, adhesive tape, hemostats, and vials of merthiolate, phenobarbital, and acetylsalicylic acid. Additional small battle dressings and morphine syrettes were also carried. In addition to units #5a and #5b battle dressings and plasma were carried in bulk. Two units of stretchers and one of splints were included.

3. Although preparation was made with a shorter operation in mind, the supplies carried were adequate to the needs of the battalion.

Aid Station

4. An aid station was established on Blue Beach One approximately centrally in the Battalion Pivouac area. Due to limited hospital corps personnel, no attempt was made to allocate corpsmen to the companies, and sick call and casualties were handled from this one station.

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